

ASPHALTUM



NATHANIEL S.
ROUNDS

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Negative Spaces
(Erase the Bus)

We were carried by the current
in a bus on a storm day with
old, proud Mr. Joe, the deep-
sea larval crab and passed what
we call the bizarre bazaar:
Adjoined buildings holding
Sicilian Pizza/Bluenose Mini
Mart/Best Choice Chinese
Food, with the tiny apartment
windows up above.

Old, proud Mr. Joe knelt in
prayer, having seen in what

appeared as a fraction of a second all the beautiful deep-sea anemones give way to the fearsome fangtooth. His horses and chariots were gone, his ambitions like ground gold suspended in honey, and his unfashionable beliefs were cast adrift while the bus wafted through Clayton Park Shopping Centre and looped around the Last Game Store.

And under the dying sunlight gasping its way through sulphuric cloud cover and further through salt-spattered windows, old, proud Joe's

countenance turned from
Sheele's green to bone-black.

But we observers stayed put--
better safe than sorry--while on
the snow-covered streets stood
critics and counselors throwing
crowns of thorns.

The cold wind blew this bus-as-
boat out of Clayton Park and up
Chain Lake Drive, the stores
closed and dark, and that
steered rudder doggedly licking
shared edges of present spaces

and the warm-grey light of
yesterday.

Lemonade Smog

Will you glimmer on the sea?
Will you fling your spear-head
on the shore? Or shall we be
content to go for a nice, big,
black angry atom that takes us
both out at the same time?

I choose to remain here until
each bed holds our tear-soaked
pillows. While we sleep I
dream a realization that death is
a great idea to leave behind.

This is a dream come true: to
become obsessed with white
angels who turn black with
deep desire. And in this bed
we find your severed heart.







Drive-In Funeral

From the comfort of our cars--
Sun roofs and leather seats--

We watched Mother Earth die
From the speedball we gave her

Gas station roses and good
Intentions failed to revive her

And as we ate our golden
Apples and tossed our empty
Goblets onto parched ground

We turned up the radios and
Joked loudly

To sever our connections to
Our broken-mother-as-meal



*Dissociative Fugue/
Lunarian's Requiem*

While men-children sat on
pillars of fool's gold I made it a
priority to die as discreetly as
possible, so as not to offend. It's
a laborer's oath.

And yet, Bunk Johnson, the
kindly commissionaire with the
much-copied ensemble of white
suit /white tie/ white
overcoat/white wing-tipped
shoes and white cane--
everything at the height of
refinement and bespoke and
timeless-- stopped to ask about

my health and to hand me a little note on rag paper with his name and address printed on the reverse where he had sealed it, doubtless with moistened sponge. In a tiny script he digressed from well wishes to folklore, history, forensic science, film theory, etymology of Aramaic words, and somehow tied the whole mess together with his fountain pen tasked in recording big ideas on such a small surface.

At this moment of his appearance he stopped the granny music of the men-

children and got the rhythm
nice and lowdown when I ran
so far away. I sing because a
flock of seagulls dropped out of
the sky and I could see them as
former aspirations, now
materialized into steadfast
angels, turning and striding
down a chalk line walk under
ginger, neon moonlight.



Dissociative Fugue No.2:
Bugarin's Savage
Chicken-Fighting

Says Melisma Bugarin, the
remorseless ballerina from
Detroit:

My convictions obliterate
uranium

In the moonlight a worm
quietly devoured that old
chestnut in my head

The worm and the chestnut
were fried with milk gravy
thrown on a cracked plate left

absently on the floor alongside
scraps of
bread / fish bones / stale onion
rings-- all for the dog to eat and
pass

I was at a complete loss
recalling my name
retracing my way back home

It was a cold
snowy walk to the ferry

I'm waiting to cross

Walking helps me
clear my mind
relieves me of that
oleaginous marmot

who tries to cling onto me and
drag me down

The moon guides me onward to
an inn by the wayside
Its host gestures for me to enter

I'm a bow-mouthed guitar fish
with an asbestos fire wall
fighting invasion from memory
loss/delayed reaction/ lack of
coordination/ spatial
disorientation
-- the offensive team playing
my body like Reg Kehoe and
his Marimba Queens

I'm valedictorian of this minor
league working class with
injuries both real and imagined

I warm up to expectations using
the stairwell as barre

On this day my eyes will
penetrate their reflection

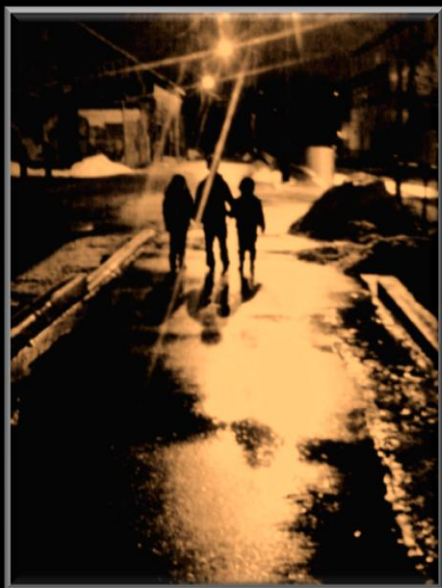
Lost in silence remorseful
luminous within and without
I conclude that in the light of
this smiling moon
No guest possesses
Features of equal beauty

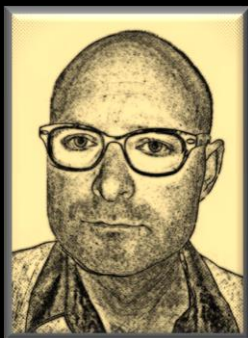
*Prima Pimple/Lost in the
Stars*

Dedicated to Otto Frederick Rohwedder
(July 7, 1880-November 8, 1960)

I was watching a television
manufactured in China when
you walked by. You had two
gangrenous ferrets and an
attitude. But my brothers Uz,
Buz, and Hazo think you have
remarkable acne. It glows in
the dark like the reticulum
constellation. And while the
baker feeds my loaf of
pumpernickel bread through
the industrial bread slicer, I see
your pimples glimmer, distant
and star-like.







Having taken a stroll from

Gottingen Street to North Street and thereafter over the McDonald Bridge and then presently to Alderney Landing culminating at length upon his admittedly belated arrival at Maplehurst—the aforesaid on a storm day—Mr. Rounds would like to take a bath and has little to declare a propos his memoirs.

